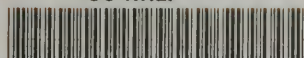


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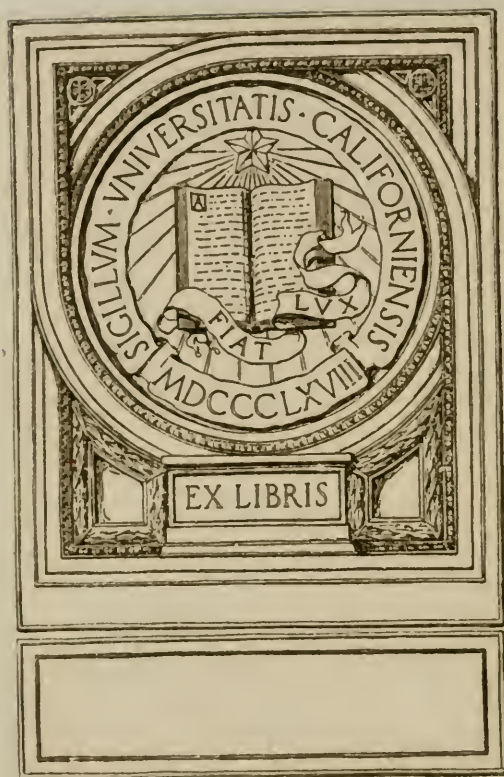
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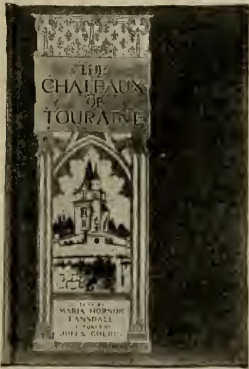
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francesco di Marco di Giacomo Raibolini

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BORN 1450: DIED 1517
SCHOOL OF BOLOGNA

FRANCESCO DI MARCO DI GIACOMO RAIBOLINI, commonly called Francia (pronounced Fran'chah), was born in Bologna in the year 1450. His parents, spoken of by Vasari as "artisans," were, as a matter of fact, people of somewhat more distinction than that term would imply, for they belonged to old and well-known families in Bologna, members of which had for several generations filled important offices of government, and had owned land in the commune of Zola Predosa from as early a date as 1308. At the time of Francia's birth, however, the family circumstances were not prosperous, although the name of his father, Marco di Giacomo Raibolini, continued to be held in high repute and appears in the civic records as that of the holder of various positions.

When the boy was old enough to learn a trade he was apprenticed to a goldsmith, preferring to learn to work in metals rather than to follow the calling of his father, who was a wood-carver. Now the name of this goldsmith was Duc, but as he was generally called Francia, the pupil also came to be called by that name, and as such he is best known in history.

Vasari says that the young Francia labored at his craft with ability and good-will, and that "his progress in his art kept proportion with his increase of stature," and adds that "his manner and conversation were so gentle and obliging that he kept all around him in good humor, and had the gift of dissipating the heavy thoughts of the most melancholy by the charms of his conversation; for these reasons he was not only beloved by all who were acquainted with him, but in the course of time he obtained the favor of many princes and nobles, Italian and others."

Francia's labors were rewarded by success. His fame as a worker in metals extended beyond the confines of his native town, and orders came to him from Ferrara, Mantua, Parma, and round about; even in Florence his skill was

recognized and highly prized. Vasari tells us that he took much pleasure in design, but that what delighted him above all else was cutting dies for medals. In this he excelled, and in some instances, notably in medals executed for Pope Julius II. and for Giovanni Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna, the heads of those magnates, with which the medals were decorated, were so fine that they "seemed to be alive."

But fine as were these medals, it was not as a medalist alone that Francia was skilled, but also as a worker in "niello"—a method of decorating a smooth metal surface with incised lines filled in with a black substance composed of a number of chemicals. When polished, the black lines remained on a light ground, producing a highly decorative effect. Niello work was very popular in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Francia acquired a reputation for the exquisite delicacy of the "nielli" he produced. Sometimes prints, or engravings on paper, were made from a cast of the work while in progress, and there are still in existence some nine or ten niello-engravings which with good reason can be ascribed to Francia's hand.

Besides his skill as a worker in gold and silver, the artist also attained celebrity as a maker of jewelry and a designer and founder of type. He was, indeed, the first to produce for the great printer, Aldus Manutius, the famous "italic" type, which was so highly prized that a special letter of privilege was given by the pope to Aldus granting him the sole right to its use—a privilege, however, which did not prevent its being copied in many parts of Italy and in France.

Calvi, who wrote a brief life of Francia in 1812, states that he matriculated in the Goldsmith's Gild of Bologna in 1482, and that in the following year he was appointed master of that same gild. It also stands recorded that in December of the year 1482 he was named Gonfaloniere del Popolo and Tribuni della Plebe, and that by Giovanni Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna, he was appointed Director of the Mint, an office which he held as long as he lived; from all which it will be seen that Francia stood high in the estimation of his fellow-citizens.

Not until he was past thirty years of age did the artist turn his attention to painting. The date is not known, but in a document of 1486, recording his taking office in the Gild of Goldsmiths, he is referred to as "*il pittore il Franza*," and it is therefore clear that he had then started on his new career.

Vasari attributes this departure to an acquaintance with Mantegna and other painters "who had acquired riches and honors by means of their art," and says that Francia's ambition was so stimulated thereby "that he resolved to try whether he could not succeed in that part of painting which belongs to color, seeing that he had reached to such a point in design that he might safely assume a place beside any of them. By way of making an attempt, therefore, he executed a few portraits and other small things, entertaining many masters of the art many months in his house to the end that they might teach him the method and processes of coloring."

That Francia may have become acquainted with Mantegna about 1472 is quite possible, but no record of a meeting with the great Mantuan painter

exists, and as a matter of fact we are without any definite knowledge of the influence which led Francia to turn his attention to painting. Nor do we know with certainty who was his first master. Early writers state that he was a pupil of Marco Zoppo, a Bolognese artist who had studied under Squarcione at Padua; but there is nothing in Francia's work to point to Zoppo as his instructor. By some critics Ercole Roberti de' Grandi is named as his master, and again, Francesco Cossa, who in 1470 had gone from Ferrara to Bologna and there established himself and opened a school, is believed to have influenced Francia's early career. Certain characteristics of Cossa's—a severity of style and a glowing color—are perceptible in some of Francia's first productions, but it is undoubtedly to another and a younger man that his indebtedness was far greater. This man was Lorenzo Costa, who, in 1483, was called from Ferrara to Bologna, and although there is no evidence to prove that Francia, his senior by several years, was at any time his pupil—nor, on the other hand, that Costa, as stated by some writers, was a pupil of Francia—it is a fact that a close friendship existed between the two artists, who worked in the same building, Francia executing his goldsmith's commissions on the ground floor, while, above, Costa was engaged in painting pictures.

"Of the two," writes Dr. Williamson, "Costa had the greater imagination, the wider knowledge, a larger love of nature, and more accuracy in drawing; but Francia was by far the grander colorist, the more deeply religious man of the two, and possessed more refinement than did Costa. They were constantly associated in important works, but whenever the two were employed together precedence is invariably given to Francia. It is quite possible that the coming of Costa to Bologna was the cause of Francia's change of craft, and that but for the friendship between the two men Francia would have remained all his life a goldsmith. . . . Their work is so much alike in its earlier stages that pictures by the one have in the past been attributed to the other; but very soon Francia surpassed his friend, and produced works that were far finer in conception, coloring, and refinement than Costa could ever have executed."

It is impossible to say what was Francia's earliest picture. In the Bologna Gallery a 'Madonna and Saints,' painted by order of Messer Bartolommeo Felicini, a wealthy citizen of Bologna, for a chapel founded by him in the Church of the Misericordia, and bearing the date 1494, is said by Vasari to be the artist's first painting, but it is evident from the maturity of style which this picture exhibits that it is the work of no inexperienced hand. Dr. Williamson inclines to the belief that a 'Crucifixion,' now in the Archiginnasio Library at Bologna, is the earliest picture by Francia that has come down to us. In the Borghese Gallery, Rome, is a St. Stephen, a single kneeling figure, which although not regarded as the first is usually held to be an early production, as are three pictures of the Madonna and Child,—one, in Berlin, in which St. Joseph is included; another, with two angels completing the group, in Munich (plate 11); and a third, now at Pressburg in the collection of Count Jean Palffy. From the beginning to the end of his career Francia frequently signed his pictures "Francia Aurifex," while after his adoption of painting, his metal work and medals, according to a statement made by Fra Leandro

Alberti in his 'Storia d'Italia,' bear the signature "Francia Pictor," thus attesting to his mastery in the two arts.

In 1499 Francia, by that time established in reputation as a painter, was commissioned by Giovanni Bentivoglio, who was ever a munificent patron of the artist, to paint an altar-piece for his chapel in the Church of San Giacomo Maggiore. This work, reproduced in plate VII, ranks as Francia's finest rendering of religious subjects. Orders were now pouring in upon him, and according to Vasari there was soon hardly a church in Bologna that could not boast a picture from his hand. Nor were his labors confined to his own city, but for the neighboring towns as well he painted many altar-pieces, some of which are now to be seen in the principal galleries of Europe.

Among the most important of these works, in addition to the one already named, may be mentioned those painted for the Church of San Martino Maggiore and for members of the Manzuoli and Scappi families, all three pictures now in the Bologna Gallery; one executed for Ludovico de Calcina, now in the Hermitage Gallery, St. Petersburg; the 'St. Geminian Altar-piece,' in Berlin, and others in Vienna and Parma, as well as numerous large paintings representing the Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation, Baptism, Coronation, Deposition, etc.

The Umbrian influence which many of the artist's works betray is by some critics attributed to the fact that at this time pictures by Perugino, then at the zenith of his fame, were coming to Bologna, where they must have been seen by Francia; and not only his pictures, but the Umbrian master himself, as recorded by Marcello Oretti,¹ visited Bologna on his way to Florence, and in all probability made the acquaintance of the goldsmith-painter, who was one of the most important personages in the city.

Besides altar-pieces and easel-pictures, among which last were a number of portraits of such excellence that they added greatly to his reputation, Francia painted several frescos. An interesting example of his work in this medium was executed in 1505 for the dining-hall of the Podestà Comunale in Bologna, commemorating the deliverance of the city from destruction by an earthquake which occurred in that year. This fresco, known as the 'Madonna del Terremoto' (Madonna of the Earthquake), represents the Madonna and Child in glory appearing in the sky, blessing the city of Bologna, which with its walls and towers lies beneath them.

Unfortunately the frescos painted by Francia for his patrons the Bentivogli were destroyed by the mob which sacked their palace in Bologna in 1507; but for those same patrons he painted, together with Lorenzo Costa and a number of pupils, a series of frescos in the Chapel of St. Cecilia attached to the Church of San Giacomo Maggiore, illustrating the legend of the saint to whom the chapel had been dedicated. The two subjects executed by Francia are the 'Marriage of St. Cecilia' and the 'Burial of St. Cecilia,' and although sadly injured by the French soldiers, who during their occupancy of Bologna in

¹ 'Notizie de professori del disegno cive pittori, scultori ed architetti bolognesi,' etc., by Marcello Oretti. A series of volumes in manuscript, compiled probably between 1640 and 1740, and preserved in the Archiginnasio Library, Bologna.

1796 stabled their horses within the chapel, enough remains of their original beauty to show that Francia, while not equal to his Florentine contemporaries, was yet skilled in this form of decorative art.

These were the last works executed by Francia for his patrons the Bentivogli. For many years their power as rulers of Bologna had been increasing, until finally they had practically become independent sovereigns who boldly defied the power of the pope. But when, in October, 1503, Julius II. was elected to the papacy, that warlike head of the Church determined to put an end to all such insubordination. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1506, he left Rome and advanced with a body of soldiers upon Bologna, and having issued a bull declaring Giovanni Bentivoglio to be an enemy to the Church, he delivered that prince's goods to pillage and granted a plenary indulgence to any one who should hand him over into the possession of the Holy See.

Deserted by his former adherents, Bentivoglio fled from Bologna and took refuge in Milan. Meantime the pope had entered the city at the head of his troops and was received with acclamations by the people, and, in order to prevent any chance of the return of Bentivoglio, the papal forces set fire to the palace he had erected, and burned it, with all its treasures, to the ground.

"The departure of Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio," says Vasari, "caused Francia great sorrow; the exile of one from whom he had received such important benefits grieving him exceedingly; but yet, like the prudent and moderate person as he was, he continued to pursue his labors with his usual assiduity." By Pope Julius the artist was held in great esteem. In November, 1506, his position as Director of the Mint at Bologna was confirmed, and two years later he was given entire charge of the provision of money for the city.

Of Francia's private life very little is known beyond the fact that he was married and that he had two sons, Giacomo and Giulio, both of whom became artists. The number of pupils he gathered about him is said to have been no less than two hundred. Of these the most noted was Timoteo Viti, believed by some critics to have been, later, Raphael's first master.

A special interest is given to Francia's latter years by the friendship that he is said to have formed with Raphael, who was then working in Rome. Malvasia, who has written much of the artists of Bologna, published in his '*Felsina Pittrice*' a letter which he claims was written by Francia to the younger man, as well as a sonnet said to have been composed by him in praise of Raphael; but the originals have never been produced, and by the best authorities these compositions are looked upon as forgeries. There is every reason to believe, however, that, as is mentioned in the records of Bologna, the two painters held intercourse with each other; and if Crowe and Cavalcaselle are wrong in their supposition that a meeting took place between them in Bologna in 1505-6, we may at all events accept Vasari's statement that "they saluted each other by letter," and further credit that historian when he goes on to say that Francia, having heard much of the divine paintings by Raphael, desired to see his works, but that he was now old and was enjoying his ease in his beloved Bologna. It so chanced, however, that Raphael had been painting a picture of St. Cecilia for one of the chapels of the Church of San Giovanni-

in-Monte, Bologna (this picture is now in the Bologna Gallery), and having packed up his work he addressed it to the care of Francia, asking him to see to its erection in the chapel for which it was intended, and begging him to repair any injury that might be found on the painting, and even that he would correct any defect, if such might strike him upon seeing the work. Francia, we are told, was greatly pleased with this commission, which would allow him to look upon a painting by Raphael, but that the sight of the picture had the effect upon him that Vasari records—namely, that its perfections so filled him with astonishment that, realizing his own inferiority, he died of grief and vexation—is wholly without foundation. His death, which occurred in 1517, when he was sixty-seven years old, was indeed sudden, being caused by apoplexy. His place of burial is not known, but it is believed that he lies in the Church of San Francesco, Bologna, or in its cloister near to the tomb now occupied by his son Giacomo.—BASED ON GEORGE C. WILLIAMSON'S LIFE OF FRANCIA

The Art of Francia

HENRI DELABORDE

FROM BLANC'S 'HISTOIRE DES PEINTRES'

ALTHOUGH not chronologically the first, yet in the sense that his influence upon the art of Bologna was such as no previous painter had exercised, Francia may be called the founder of the Bolognese school. At the time of his birth a number of painters had already lived and worked in Bologna, and as far back as the period when Cimabue started at Florence the reform which Giotto was to carry on so ably, perhaps even prior to those early tentative efforts at emancipation, a few Bolognese artists whose names have come down to us in history had, to some extent, adopted the Greek manner and sought to popularize its traditions. Later on, the miniaturist Franco, whose praise was sung by Dante, and the painters Jacopo degli Avanzi, Lippo di Dalmasii, and finally, Marco Zoppo, the last of the old Bolognese painters who preceded Francia, left works which were not devoid of merit, but in which can be traced neither the progressive steps of a teaching common to all, nor the development of principles attributable to any one master.

It is, however, altogether different with the works which were produced under the teaching of Francia, for under him all the Bolognese artists followed the same rules and adopted the same method. This unanimity, to be sure, was of short duration. Francia's pupils did not in their turn transmit to their followers the same docile spirit that they themselves had shown, so that scarcely had the school been established when, even in the second generation of its existence, it became divided. An imitation of the Roman manner, introduced into Bologna by Bagnacavallo, awakened a taste for the style known as Michelangesque and soon became a mania. It therefore came to pass that what had at first seemed to be a decisive epoch in the history of Bolognese art turned out to be after all merely a chance event, of which the origin, the

characteristics, and the consequences are to be found embodied only in the works of Francia and his principal pupils. . . .

Among the Italian painters who at the opening of the sixteenth century endeavored to reconcile the pious traditions of the middle ages with the advance which had been made in the domain of the purely picturesque, Francia is one whose efforts have been most meritorious and most wisely directed. His style, devoid no doubt in sacred subjects of the perfect simplicity and fervor which permeate the works of Giotto's followers, is at all events exempt from that pagan elegance which the art known as Renaissance art was to employ at first as an auxiliary resource, and then as a principal means of expression.

If Francia cannot be classed among that group of painters who were above all else religious painters, he does not at all events swell the ranks of those who, merely skilled in the technical qualities of their art, saw in sacred subjects only a pretext for picturesque arrangement, for bold draftsmanship, or for charm of color. So, too, because of a certain absence of style in his figures and by reason of a caution and timidity in expressing his feelings, he stands apart from that great group of men who personify the last step in the development of Italian painting. In a word, Francia's works form a sort of link between the incomplete productions of the Primitives and the finished and perfected works of the Leonardos and the Raphaels; or, to make use of an old mythological figure, it might be said that his place is half-way up the slopes of Mt. Parnassus, on whose summit the greatest heroes of art sit enthroned. He is in full sight, comparatively easy of access, and equally removed from those whose talents are but mediocre and those who are most divinely inspired. —

FROM THE FRENCH

E. H. AND E. W. BLASHFIELD AND A. A. HOPKINS, EDITORS 'VASARI'S LIVES'

FRANCIA represents the school of Bologna at its best; grave and deeply religious, he is sometimes quite noble by force of this earnest gravity. His color is Umbrian in its strength and richness, but is a little heavier than that of Perugino; he is as sincerely reverent as Perugino at his best, yet has not quite the same charm, nor yet any of the latter's affectation. He is more natural and simple than the Umbrian; his art is stamped with the honest, unaffected, burgher piety of Bologna *La Grassa*, rather than with the perfervid ecstasy of mystical and savage Perugia. His types are even homely, but his round-headed, short-bearded saints are beautiful in the *naïf* sincerity of their expression; his snub-nosed, heavy-chinned, very earnest, but sometimes rather dull Madonnas look as though Giotto's women had been perfected by fifteenth-century technique upon our master's panels.

As a portrait-painter his simplicity and directness, closeness of modeling, and excellent color help to make him admirable and even impressive. There is nothing very salient in his long list of works; his great St. Cecilia frescos are rather entertaining by their quaint costumes than great by other qualities, but his easel-pictures are sustained and admirable. In the choir of the Renaissance his note is grave and instinct with quiet feeling; he has no *roulades* nor flourishes, but among all the painters of the Emilia and the Ferrarese, Costa and

Cossa, Tura and the two Ercoles, Roberti and Grandi, by far the fullest chord is struck by Francesco Francia.

JULIA CARTWRIGHT

'MANTEGNA AND FRANCIA'

IF we consider the place which Francia holds in contemporary art we shall see how little he had in common with the spirit of his age, and how much of his aspirations and sympathies belonged to the old world of the earlier religious painters. Living as he did in the days of Raphael, at a moment when the Renaissance was fast hastening to its culminating point, Francia took no share in the great movement that was swaying forward at every point, but stood apart in a sphere of his own. In an age when revived Paganism had penetrated into every part of society, and the love of the antique was the ruling impulse of intellectual thought, he scarcely shows a trace of this influence, and derives his inspiration exclusively from Christian sources.

But in this realm of mystic art it must be owned that he takes the highest place. For to the earnestness and purity of Fra Angelico's conceptions Francia brought a mastery of resources which had been lacking to those older painters. His creations are animated with a warmer humanity and a more vigorous life, they have all the charm of glowing colors and strongly contrasted light and shadow, while secular influences are allowed a larger part in the rich ornament and noble architecture which surround them.

Thus Francia shares with Perugino the praise of having combined the technical perfection of a later age with the Christian motives which had so largely influenced the first efforts of Italian art. But, unlike Perugino, the religious feeling which formed the secret of Francia's inspiration remained fresh and strong within his breast to the end of his life, and was with him still a real and living power when it had sunk into conventionalism and affectation in the latter works of the Umbrian master, and was rapidly yielding to the growing influences of a worldly age in the creations of Raphael.

Slowly but surely men's thoughts and their ideals of life had undergone a complete change, and the art of Italy was entering on a new phase in which there was no longer room for the rapture of Fra Angelico's faces or the sweet gentleness of the Madonnas who haunted Francia's dreams.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

'RENAISSANCE IN ITALY'

THE spirituality that renders Fra Angelico unintelligible to minds less ecstatically tempered than his own is not found in such excess in Francia, nor does his work suffer from the insipidity of Perugino's affectation. Deep religious feeling is combined with physical beauty of the purest type. A greater degree of naïveté and naturalness compensates for the inferiority of Francia's to Perugino's supremely perfect handling. This is true of Francia's numerous pictures at Bologna—where, indeed, in order to be rightly known, he should be studied by all lovers of the fifteenth-century style in its most delightful moments. For mastery over oil-painting and for charm of color Francia challenges comparison with what is best in Perugino, though he did not quite attain the same technical excellence.

GEORGE C. WILLIAMSON

'FRANCIA'

THE influence of Francia does not appear to have extended far beyond his immediate surroundings. His school was a very large one, and he implanted his own ideas very firmly upon his pupils; but he appears neither to have been touched by the influences of pagan literature that were abroad in his time, nor to have, in his turn, sent any great movement away from Bologna in connection with his art.

He occupies a place apart. His pictures almost without exception are religious; they betray no special sympathy with the classic or humanistic movement. There is not one of them that is concerned with mythology or pagan story, but all have sacred themes as their subject.

His coloring was always rich, full, and deep. His pathos was never forced, and always assisted by the tone of his color-scheme. His earnestness and purity were very marked; his tender sympathy, religious devotion, warm-hearted acceptance of the truths of religion, and simple faith were all clear features of his life. He was possessed of a mastery over his materials which is well shown in every branch of art with which he had to do, and is especially marked when color is to be taken into account. He was able to create an emotion, and to move the heart of the spectator in the direction that he desired, whether it be that of sympathy, affection, or sadness. He never depicted scenes of horror or intensified bodily suffering in his works; but loved to paint those passages of pure affection, of deep love, of tender pathos, of adoring reverence, or of aspiring hope, in which his heart rejoiced.

He takes a place towards the close of the Renaissance as a great master whose Christian motives were never lost; who was controlled through all his life by the teaching of his religion; who never became merely mechanical or formal; who was always master of his resources, always ready to use them in the service of the Church, in whose teaching he had so profound a belief, and always ready to put not alone his whole heart into his work, but also his whole soul and emotions, in order that the result should be the very best of which he was capable, and a living part of himself.

The Works of Francia

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

'THE MADONNA OF THE ROSE GARDEN'

PLATE I

JULIA CARTWRIGHT thus describes this picture in the Munich Gallery: "The Child lies on a red cloth spread on the grass of a flowery lawn, stretching out its little arms with a smile of delight to its mother, who is in the act of sinking upon her knees in a rapture of loving adoration. A trellis of tall roses, which might have been painted by a Botticelli or a Filippino Lippi, fences the garden round, and in the pleasant meadows beyond, horses are feeding on the banks of a winding stream, and church towers rise in the

distance. Nowhere is the transparent delicacy of Francia's coloring more pleasing than in the silver-gray tones of the Virgin's robe, while her countenance wears that gentle air of tender melancholy which haunts his conceptions in the same way as the smile of Leonardo's faces and the deeper sadness of Botticelli's Madonnas."

"This beautiful picture," writes Eugène Müntz, "conceived in that spirit of mysticism which marks the productions of the Primitives, breathes a delicious freshness and reveals Francia as a poet as well as a painter."

The panel measures five feet eight inches high by four feet four inches wide.

'MADONNA, CHILD, AND ANGELS'

PLATE II

THIS picture, an early work of Francia's, is now in the Munich Gallery. As in many of Bellini's compositions, the Madonna supports the Child standing upon a balustrade, which is here covered with gold-embroidered tapestry. Mary's robe is deep red and her mantle a rich peacock blue lined with dark green. Behind her is a low crimson screen, to the right and left of which stand angels—one with a wreath upon his long ringlets, the other with his fair hair encircled by a fillet. Dr. Williamson calls attention to the fact that the pattern of the drapery on which the Child is standing is identical with the design of one of the copes in a signed altar-piece by Francia, thus giving proof, if such were needed, of the genuineness of the picture.

The painting is on wood and measures a little more than two feet high by one foot four inches wide.

'THE ANNUNCIATION'

PLATE III

ACCORDING to records found by Dr. Williamson in Bologna, this picture was painted between 1500 and 1510 for the Duke Francesco Maria d'Urbino, and given by him to his secretary for a chapel in the Carmelite Church of Modena. There it remained until bought by an agent of Lord Northwick, from whose possession it passed into that of M. F. Reiser, and finally into the collection of the Duke d'Aumale (Musée Condé) at Chantilly.

The Virgin, clad in a red robe and blue mantle, stands beneath the portico of a Bolognese palace of the fifteenth century. Her eyes are raised to the annunciate angel who, clad in draperies of blue and yellow, flies towards her with wings outspread, bearing in his hand the lily branch. Near the Virgin stands St. Albert the Carmelite saint, wearing the brown robe and white mantle of his Order. He holds a book and cross, and beneath his feet is a devil.

"It is a wonderful picture," writes Dr. Williamson, "very Umbrian in its characteristics, especially in the way in which St. Albert is standing, his foot upon the crushed demon, and wrapped in contemplation, indifferent to all around him. Umbrian also is the manner of painting the landscape, but the scene was near to Bologna, and so closely has the artist copied the scenery that I have been able to identify the very rock in the picture, at Sasso, near to which the Order had a country home. The coloring is very rich, full of depth and tone, and the crimsons and blues are especially important."

The picture measures six feet high by four feet four inches wide.

'THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST'

PLATE IV

THIS famous picture, bearing the inscription *FRANCIA AVRIFEX. BON. F. M. V. VIII* (Francia, Goldsmith of Bologna, did this in 1509), is now in the Royal Gallery, Dresden. Its previous history is unknown. Vasari speaks of a 'Baptism of Christ' painted by Francia after the departure from Bologna of Giovanni Bentivoglio, and taken to Modena, but whether he refers to this work or to a similar and earlier version of the same subject which is now at Hampton Court cannot be proved, for although many pictures at Dresden came from Modena, no mention is made of this one in the list.

The Dresden 'Baptism,' as its date proves, is a late work. "The faces," writes Dr. Williamson, "have acquired that grace and sweetness that Francia was so well able to produce; the draperies lack the crumpled metallic folds that mark the niello stage; the bushy trees contrast with the finer ones in the regular fashion, and the effect of light on the water, which is so marked a characteristic of the Hampton Court picture, in this one has assumed an even greater importance, and is treated with much skill and effect."

The picture was damaged by a shell in the bombardment of Dresden in 1760, and has, moreover, been injured somewhat by restoration. The figure of Christ standing on the surface of the shallow river, his feet reflected in its clear waters, is full of a sentiment of deep holiness. St. John the Baptist, a red mantle worn over his gray camel's-hair garment, kneels reverently upon the bank as he is about to perform the sacred rite, while on the other side of the picture two angels, one in yellow, the other in light red, witness the scene, and in the sky the Holy Spirit appears as a dove.

The painting is on wood and measures nearly seven feet high by five feet eight inches wide.

'THE ADORATION OF THE CHILD'

PLATE V

VASARI tells us that the success of the altar-piece painted by Francia for Giovanni Bentivoglio (see plate vii) was so great that his son Antonio Galeazzo Bentivoglio, archdeacon of Bologna, and papal prothonotary, was induced to give the master a commission to be executed jointly by him and by Lorenzo Costa for a picture to be placed over the high altar of the Church of the Misericordia in Bologna.

The main body of this altar-piece, on which Francia painted 'The Adoration of the Child,' is now in the Bologna Gallery. The lunette by Lorenzo Costa, representing 'The Annunciation,' is still in the church for which the whole work was painted, and the predella, also by Costa, showing 'The Adoration of the Magi,' is in the Brera Gallery, Milan.

'The Adoration of the Child' is painted in a colder key of color than was customary with Francia. The composition is very beautiful, the figures well drawn, and the distant landscape varied and rendered with great delicacy. In the group of adoring saints surrounding the new-born Christ Francia has introduced the figure of the donor, who had lately returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, kneeling on the left, with the red cross on his mantle.

The shepherd standing at the right of the picture is the artist's friend Girolamo Pandolfi di Casio, a goldsmith and also a poet, who received from the pope a laurel crown which Francia has here placed upon his head. Beside the Virgin kneels St. Augustine in miter and richly embroidered cope; St. Joseph, clad in red and yellow, is at the left, leaning upon his staff; while in St. Francis, whose hands are folded in prayer as he looks devoutly at the Child, tradition says the painter has given us a likeness of himself.

The painting measures seven and a half feet high by about six feet wide.

'PORTRAIT OF FEDERIGO GONZAGA'

PLATE VI

THIS portrait, which for many years hung unrecognized in the collection of its present owner, A. W. Leatham, Esq., at Miserden Park, Gloucestershire, England, has been identified by Mr. Herbert Cook as the long-lost likeness which Francia is known to have painted in Bologna in the summer of 1510 of young Federigo Gonzaga, son of the celebrated Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua. The story of this picture as told by Mr. Cook in 'The Athenæum' of February 7, 1903, and in the 'Burlington Magazine' of that same year, as well as by Mrs. Ady (Julia Cartwright) in her recent work, 'Isabella d'Este,' is briefly as follows: In the year 1510, by order of Pope Julius II., Isabella d'Este sent her young son, Federigo, then a child of ten, to Rome as a hostage for her husband, Giovanni Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, who through the pope's influence had lately been liberated from the hands of the Venetians, by whom he had been taken prisoner after the battle of Legnano. On the way to Rome the boy passed through Bologna, where his father then was, and Isabella, wishing to have a souvenir of her son, asked Lorenzo Costa to paint his portrait for her. Costa, however, was too busy just then to comply with her request, and Francia was commissioned to do so in his stead. From Isabella's letters we learn that this portrait was begun on July 29, and that before August 10 the finished work had been delivered into her hands. "It is impossible," she wrote, "to see a better portrait, or one more like Federigo."

The painting here reproduced tallies with the description which Isabella gives of it in her correspondence. Coincidences of age, date, style, and detail all point to the conclusion that it is the identical portrait which so delighted the great Marchioness. It represents a boy of apparently ten years of age, with brown eyes and long fair hair. He is richly dressed, as befitted his station in life, and holds a dagger in one hand. The background is an elaborately painted landscape resembling many others in Francia's works. "Not only is it a genuine piece," writes Mr. Herbert Cook, "but it is as fine a thing as Francia ever painted, and in absolutely perfect condition."

In May, 1512, nearly two years after the portrait was painted, Isabella gave it to a gentleman of Ferrara, Zaninello by name, who had rendered her great services. It probably remained in Ferrara in private possession until taken to Paris among Napoleon's spoils. The father of the present owner bought it from the Napoleon collection, and now, after four centuries, the long-missing portrait of Federigo Gonzaga has once more been brought to light.

OF the many altar-pieces painted by Francia, none equals in beauty, nor surpasses in technical excellence, the famous group of the Madonna with saints and angels known as the 'Bentivoglio Altar-piece.' This work bears the date 1499 and was painted by order of Giovanni Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna, for his family chapel in the great church of San Giacomo Maggiore in that city, where it still occupies its original place.

"In this noteworthy picture," writes Dr. Williamson, "there is to be seen a great advance over the works that had preceded it. Doubtless Francia strained his utmost to please the important patron who had commissioned it and whose satisfaction could make his reputation and insure for him many other commissions. . . . There was a further necessity laid upon him in this work which taxed all his powers, and that was the wish of Giovanni Bentivoglio that two of his children should be introduced into the picture, and that the artist should paint their portraits in the two angels who appear in the upper part of the composition on either side of the Madonna. In every way Francia acquitted himself well, and Vasari tells us that so pleased was Bentivoglio with the work that he gave him over and above the promised payment 'a very handsome and most honorable gift.'"

Seated upon a lofty throne against a rich architectural background is the Madonna with the Child upon her knee. Beside her are adoring angels, and at her feet stand, on the right, St. John the Evangelist and St. Sebastian, and on the left St. Augustine and a saint in armor who has been designated variously as St. Florian, St. Fabiano, and St. Proculus, military patron of Bologna. On the steps of the throne two angels are seated playing upon lute and viol—a favorite motive with Francia, as it was with Bellini and other Venetian painters.

The colors in this picture, of which blue is the prevailing hue, are rich and glowing, and the figures of the saints are more vigorous and manly than in any other of Francia's works, that of St. Sebastian, indeed (called by Burckhardt "one of the most perfect forms of the fifteenth century"), being so highly thought of by later Bolognese artists as to be often copied into their compositions.

ACCORDING to early Bolognese writers Francia painted many important portraits and gained for himself a great reputation in that branch of art. Of these works, however, so few well-authenticated ones remain that those which are without question accepted as Francia's can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

No dissentient voice, it is believed, has been raised as to the genuineness of the great portrait of Bartolommeo Bianchini, here reproduced, a work of Francia's early period and of the highest quality. Mr. R. H. Benson, writing of this painting in the catalogue of the exhibition of pictures held at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, in 1894, says that it is "a marvel of fine con-

dition, and betrays the technique of the goldsmith seeking for the quality of enamel."

Bartolommeo Bianchini was an eminent senator of Bologna, as well as a poet who earned added distinction by some lines written in praise of the artists of his native city, and especially of his friend Francesco Raibolini, called Francia. The life-sized portrait here reproduced shows him dressed in a dark-colored jacket and wearing a black cap. He holds a letter in his right hand. The landscape in the background is carefully and minutely painted. The portrait is on panel, and measures nearly two feet high by one foot three and a half inches wide. It is owned by George Salting, Esq., London.

'MADONNA AND CHILD'

PLATE IX

SEATED before a hedge of roses, the Madonna, in a red robe and green mantle, holds in her lap the Child Jesus, whose little hand rests within that of his mother. Mary's face is so full of a sweet tenderness that it goes far to justify the saying ascribed to Raphael, that "no Madonnas were so holy and beautiful as those which Francia painted." This picture, now in the Borghese Gallery, Rome, was commissioned by Sister Dorotea di Fantuzzi, of the Convent of Santa Maria Maddalena in Bologna, as an inscription on the back of the panel testifies. The damaged condition of the painting, as well as the unskilful restoration to which it has been subjected, have caused its authenticity to be questioned by some critics, who have given it to Giacomo, Francia's son; but the ease, grace, and simplicity of the composition, the delicate way in which the rose-hedge is painted, and above all the expression of purity in the faces, so characteristic of the older artist, point to the authorship of Francia himself, and by the majority of judges it is regarded as a work of his hand.

"It recalls the 'Madonna of the Rose Garden' at Munich," writes Dr. Williamson, "and in its full and flowing draperies is one of the finest pieces of painting and arrangement that Francia ever did."

'PIETÀ'

PLATE X

THIS picture is the lunette for a great altar-piece painted by Francia between 1510 and 1515 for the Buonvisi Chapel in the Church of San Frediano in Lucca. In the following century the work was removed from its place in the church to the Ducal Palace of Lucca, and on the occasion of a sale of the Duke of Lucca's effects in 1840 was taken to London, where it was soon afterwards purchased for the National Gallery.

On the main body of the altar-piece are represented the Madonna and St. Anne with the Child seated upon a throne about which are grouped four saints, while at its base is a graceful figure of the youthful St. John. Beautiful as is this portion of the picture, the lunette, now detached from it, and reproduced in plate x, is still more so. "No picture," writes Julia Cartwright, "is more popular or has ever been more frequently copied and reproduced than Francia's 'Pietà.' This is due not only to the richness of coloring and the admirable balance of the composition, but to the purity and tenderness of

the feeling which the goldsmith-painter here reveals. The dead Christ rests in the deep sleep of death on his mother's knees, but instead of the usual saints, Mary has for attendants two bright-haired angels robed in red and green, one of whom reverently supports the head, while the other folds his hands in silent worship at the feet of the Saviour."

The lunette measures three feet two inches high by six feet wide.

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS BY FRANCIA
WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

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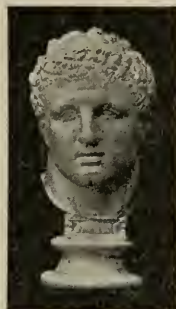
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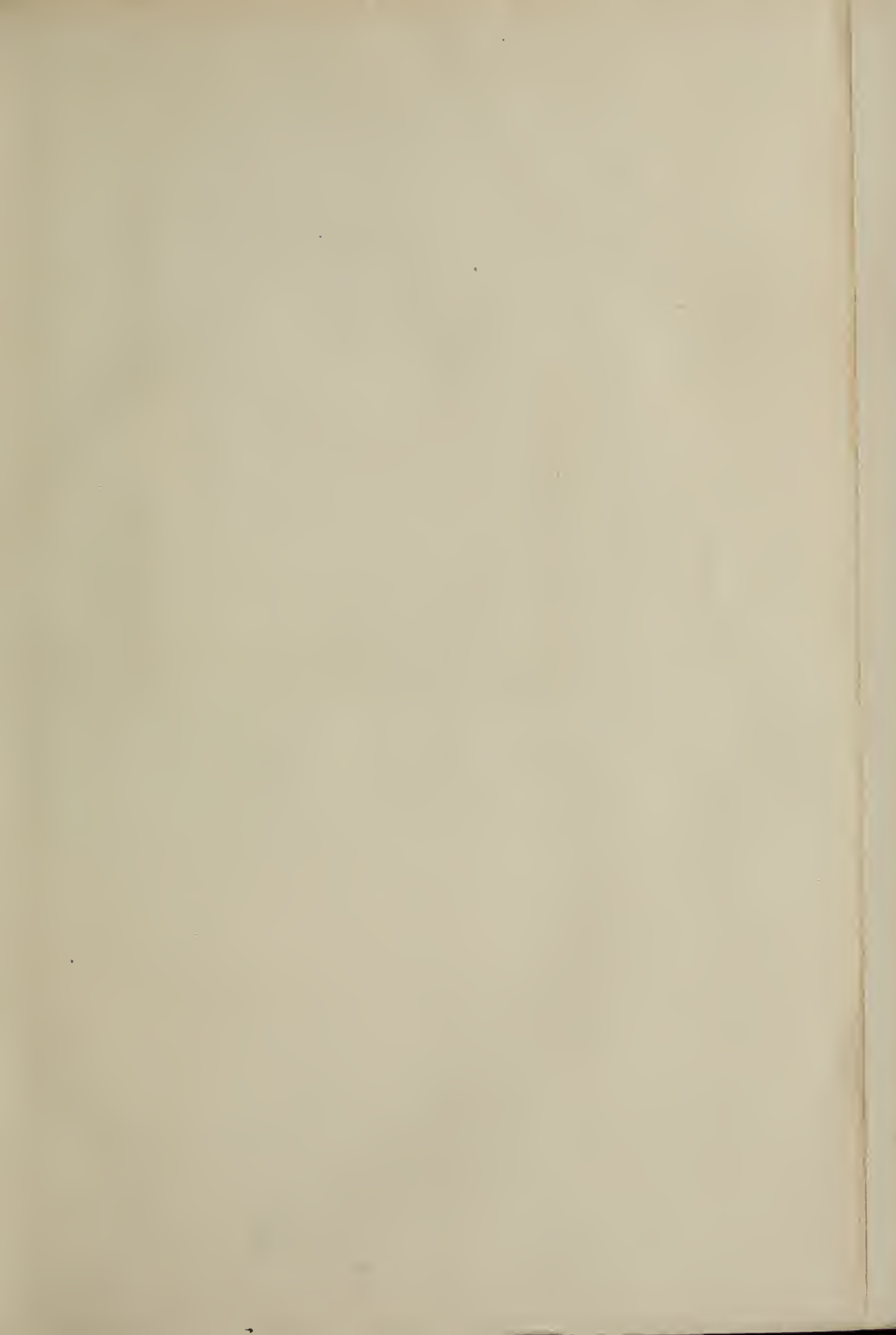
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